



# Vermiculite slows Libby ramp work

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**LIBBY** — City officials and the Environmental Protection Agency are considering options after vermiculite and tremolite rocks were found during excavation of a new boat ramp at Riverside Park.

A two-inch layer of vermiculite was uncovered in the bank along the ramp down to the water. The layer is 8-10 inches below the grass surface but exposed along the ramp. Vermiculite and large tremolite rocks also were found in an area on the upstream side of the ramp.

The contamination was found just before Memorial Day weekend. EPA crews covered the area with tarps and fencing. At this point contamination is known to exist on the higher bank along the new ramp, along the top of the riverbank from the new ramp towards the dry well and on a section of ground at the far end of the park.

"The ramp area did not pose a threat to workers doing the concrete work," said Courtney Zamora, on-site representative for the Volpe Center.

Surface samples were taken along the ramp, which came back no-detect. Workers were given the go-ahead to keep building the ramp.

The city's concern was getting the concrete ramp in place before the river began rising for sturgeon flows, said Mayor Tony Berget. The EPA will consider whether the ramp work can continue with excavation and construction of the asphalt roadway leading to the ramp.

The city is facing a September deadline to finish the boat ramp under terms of a \$9,000 Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks grant. Field manager Dave Schroeder said contamination pulled down off the bank could be removed and the bank covered with tarps so that the asphalt work can be completed.

"We might have to do a lot of sampling or the other option as we can begin to dig and see what happens," Zamora said.

Government crews are checking the areas around the existing boat ramp, which remains open, and the dry well. They haven't found signs of contamination but Zamora said it wouldn't be unusual for some flakes of vermiculite to spread from the new ramp site to the older ramp by the heavy traffic.

"We're trying to figure out if (W.R.) Grace should clean this or us," said Jim Christiansen, cleanup coordinator. "We will get it fixed up. It's kind of typical and we're going to bump into this stuff as we go along."